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Vogel, Lars; Edinger, Michael

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Role Perceptions, Party Cohesion and Political Attitudes of East and West German Parliamentarians Findings from the Jena Parliamentary Survey (2003–4)*

MICHAEL EDINGER and LARS VOGEL**

Jena University

Abstract: This article deals with similarities and differences in the orientations of East and West German MPs more than a decade after the unification of the country. Based on data from the Jena Parliamentary Survey, thus far the largest survey among German parliamentarians, carried out in 2003–4, the paper discusses three hypotheses. While differences between deputies from the East and the West are found to be significant for some dimensions, they are, in general, subordinate to if not derived from the inter-factional differences induced by party competition. In spite of this evident impact of partisanship, German parliamentary parties exhibit unexpectedly low levels of party discipline / party unity in their attitudes towards the party and policy preferences. This phenomenon is slightly more pronounced in East Germany than in the West. Viewed against the background of parties as monopolists in the recruitment process and the reward schemes for MPs, this represents the most surprising finding from the survey.

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Introduction: German unity as an experiment for parliamentary integration

The peaceful autumn revolution of 1989 not only paved the way for German unification it also led to the rebirth of parliamentary democracy in Eastern Germany after decades of dictatorship. The new parliamentarians from the East German states, though not necessarily complete political novices, were 'newcomers' to the world of

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** Direct all correspondence to: Dr. Michael Edinger, Sonderforschungsbereich 580, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Carl-Zeiss-Str. 2, D-07743 Jena, e-mail: s6edmi@nds.rz.uni-jena.de; and Lars Vogel, Sonderforschungsbereich 580, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Carl-Zeiss-Str. 2, D-07743 Jena, e-mail: lars_vogel@gmx.net

representative democracy. As such they had hardly any experience with parliamentary politics. For this reason, not to mention their socialisation in political systems as divergent as those of the GDR and the FRG, the differences between East and West German MPs in the initial post-unification period were pronounced.

Consequently, East German parliamentary life in its early stages was to some extent a micro-level experiment, exhibiting some parallels with the 'great social experiment' of German unification. Learning by doing, the new MPs, as the actors in parliamentary democracy, had to define their roles as the elected representatives of the people and accustom themselves to the rules of the parliamentary 'game'. Against this background it comes as no surprise that parliamentary life has undergone some significant changes since 1990. The changes that deputies have undergone can be characterised as a shift from amateurism to a more 'professional' conduct, the blueprints for which were provided by West German MPs. They are best reflected in the career paths and career strategies of parliamentarians. Yet it remains uncertain to what extent the processes of adaptation and convergence have been accompanied by changes in role perceptions and political orientations. Almost fifteen years after the re-establishment of parliamentary democracy and after three legislative terms, the time seems right to take stock.

It is evident that the processes mentioned above cannot be addressed just by studying MPs' biographies or by analysing their voting behaviour. Proper answers require information that only the parliamentarians themselves can provide. Such information is available on approximately 900 German MPs, both from the Bundestag and from ten (out of sixteen) state legislatures, from the Jena Parliamentary Survey in 2003–4, the largest so far in Germany since the Second World War. The survey was conducted between September 2003 and February 2004 through telephone interviews (CATI); in this procedure a methodological innovation was introduced into representative elite research.¹ In comparison to previous research the overall turnout was satisfactory, with well over one-half of all MPs (57.4%) taking part in the survey. But state legislators are strongly over-represented (with fewer national MPs responding), and MPs from the communist successor party, PDS, are also clearly over-represented.²

¹ Within the framework of the Sonderforschungsbereich 580 it was possible to carry out 921 full interviews with an average duration of about 40 minutes each. Another 33 interviews were conducted with German members of the European Parliament and yet another 550 interviews with former national and state legislators. For the purpose of this article these interviews are excluded from the analysis. For in-depth information on the concept and on the methodological aspects of the survey compare Jahr and Edinger [2005 forthcoming].

² The over-representation of the Socialist MPs from PDS is less pronounced when East and West German MPs are analysed separately, as the PDS has no parliamentary representation in the Western legislatures and the response rates in East Germany were high across PPGs. The exact response rates by parliamentary level and by government/opposition are presented in Appendix 1; the rates for the parliamentary party groups and East and West German legislators are in Appendix 2. Given the focus of the analysis the decision was made against using party weights because throughout the analysis the comparison is always West, East

In spite of the fact that MPs are of obvious interest to at least two branches of political sociology, i.e. parliamentary research and elite studies, there is little literature available that this article could draw on.³ Whilst German unification sparked off research on representative elites from East Germany, its focus was mainly on elite circulation and on the recruitment of Eastern state legislators.⁴ In the early and mid-1990s systematic research into attitudes, and particularly role perceptions, was carried out almost exclusively by Werner Patzelt [Patzelt 1994].⁵ Using survey data he was able to show that, as early as the first legislative term, the role perceptions of East German MPs had become similar to those of their Western colleagues [Patzelt 2001]. For the past ten years though no survey-based research has been undertaken that included more than one parliament.

The analysis in this article relies almost exclusively on data from the survey's telephone interviews. Taking some concepts from the literature on representation and party cohesion as inspiration for the analytical framework, the emphasis here is on analysing new data in order to identify zones of similarity and zones of difference between East and West German MPs. However, the analysis is not limited to a single dimension of comparison. Instead, it also comprises the reasons for the prevalence of differences more than a dozen years after German unification. The analysis is based on three hypotheses:

(i) *With regard to political attitudes the integration of East and West German legislators lags behind the level of integration in terms of role perceptions ('the cultural lag').* Role perceptions of parliamentarians are shaped by the existing structure of opportunities. Since many components of the legal and political framework defining such opportunities are roughly the same in East and West Germany, MPs' role perceptions should have become more similar. This is not the case with regard to political orientations and to policy preferences in particular. These attitudes can be traced to political socialisation, and they are also influenced by the values and policy preferences of the electorate. With regard to both, obvious differences between East and West exist.

without PDS and PDS, and because generally PPGs are controlled for. When distinguishing, for example, the PDS from the other parliamentary parties, it was possible to check whether its over-representation produced a major bias for the overall distribution or not.

³ This observation obviously does not refer to the parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and their members. Since this article deals only with German MPs, East and West German alike, almost no reference to the literature on CEE parliaments is made.

⁴ The key finding of exceptional elite circulation [cf. Derlien 1997] was recently confirmed for the representative elite; compare Edinger [2004]. For the recruitment of East German state legislators see Lock [1998].

⁵ Some aspects are also covered in the surveys carried out by Bernhard Wessels among members of the Bundestag in 1996 and in 2003 [Katz and Wessels 1999; Wessels 2005]. The focus of both surveys though was considerably different from the Sonderforschungsbereich survey, and the analyses of the findings have not yet included a systematic comparison of East and West German MPs.

(ii) *Although differences between MPs from East and West are of some significance, party affiliation is a more distinguishing factor.* As is common in a party democracy like Germany, political and parliamentary discourse is structured along party lines. Therefore, big differences between members of different caucuses are almost trivial. However, the argument here is that such differences also extend (a) to those orientations that are not related to political conflicts, and (b) to politics, that is, to matters of democratic decision-making.

(iii) *In accordance with the pre-unification status quo the parties in parliament remain cohesive.* Parliamentary party discipline, as documented by voting along party lines in committees and the plenary alike, rests on a broad set of shared beliefs and convictions held by MPs from the same party group. Strong party cohesion cannot be taken for granted, and even less so given that inter-party divisions (the topic of the second hypothesis) may also co-exist with moderate degrees of inner-party unity.

These hypotheses will not be discussed separately here or treated in sections because they are directly related to one another. Serving as 'underlying' hypotheses, they will be referred to throughout the text and they will be tested in any of the three following chapters where appropriate. Section two in the article is devoted to the role perceptions of German parliamentarians, addressing the focus of representation and parliamentary career ambitions among MPs. In the third section questions relating to parliament as an institution will be dealt with. The focus here is on the attitudes of MPs towards their own parliamentary party group (PPG), that is, on party discipline and party cohesion. Another aspect of PPG unity is analysed in the fourth section through an investigation into MPs' political convictions, politics orientations, and (some) policy preferences. Referring back to the hypotheses, the conclusion will present a discussion of the empirical findings and try to identify how different East and West German MPs (still) are.

Role perceptions: representation and career orientations

In *The Legislative System* by Wahlke et al. [1962: 8] the authors interpret the role of an MP as referring to "a coherent set of 'norms' of behaviour which are thought by those involved in the interactions being viewed to apply to all persons who occupy the position of legislator". The role concept is generally used to bridge the gap between the structural and the action-oriented approach to social reality. On the one hand, roles articulate the demands of the system through certain standards of behaviour. On the other hand, the behaviour is not fully determined by the role. Some scope remains for interpreting role expectations, which enables the deputy to respond to structural and situational conditions. In this analysis the role perceptions of MPs are therefore interpreted as an MP's generalised understanding of his or her own behaviour, shaped by both normative expectations and structural conditions.

One of the most important contexts is the generalised relationship between deputies and their constituents. In modern democracies this relationship ought to

Table 1. German MPs' focus of representation by PPG (%)

	East (n=430)	West (n=421)	Christian Democrats (CDU) (n=333)	Social Democrats (SPD) (n=299)	Liberals (FDP) (n=49)	Greens (B90) (n=43)	Socialists (PDS) (n=123)
Party	9	11	5	10	10	26	16
Voters	15	12	10	11	8	21	27
Constituency	21	29	33	28	10	5	9
Whole country	56	49	53	50	71	49	48

Note: When the sum of percentages does not equal 100 this is due to truncation.

constitute some kind of representation. As Hanna F. Pitkin pointed out, representation "means the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact" [Pitkin 1967: 8–9]. Most of the literature on representation focuses on *how* something is made present, therefore often referring to Burke's distinction between trustee and delegate. Since Patzelt [1993: 181–219] has shown that this distinction is almost irrelevant for the daily work of German deputies, we must shift our perspective towards the object that is made present, i.e. the focus of representation.

In the survey a forced choice question was asked about whether MPs see themselves primarily as a representative of the whole country, of the constituency, of the MP's particular set of voters or of the party (see Table 1). The results may indicate some kind of social desirability, as the absolute majority of MPs perceive themselves as representatives of the whole country, while only a small minority claim to primarily represent their party or their own voters.⁶ Representing the constituency is considered the priority by around one-fourth of the MPs. This amount is significantly related (Cramer's V: 0.23, $p < 0.01$) to the conditions of candidature, whereby MPs who won a district directly are more likely to see themselves as representatives of that constituency. Given that the German electoral system, though largely proportional, also includes a majoritarian element, one-half of the seats in the national and a comparable proportion in most of the state parliaments have to be won in Single Member Districts (SMD)⁷. Deputies from small parties like Greens

⁶ This result stands in sharp contrast to the preferences Czech MPs express on the focus of representation. In response to an almost identical question as the one used in this survey, only around one-fourth of Czech deputies in 2003 saw themselves mainly as representatives of all citizens. The authors thank Zdenka Mansfeldová for providing these figures.

⁷ The 'personalised proportional' election system in Germany allows two different modes of candidature. Each voter has two votes. The second vote decides the proportional amount of seats in parliament a party could gain. The first vote decides the candidates, which are elected by a relative majority in each constituency. The mandates a party has gained directly are subtracted from all possible mandates for the party. Therefore, half of the seats are held by directly elected MPs, while the other half are held by candidates who ran on party lists. Most

and Liberals but also the Socialists, that is, the post-communist PDS,⁸ are mostly elected on party lists and, therefore, they are more likely to see themselves as representatives of the party or of their voters than of any constituency.

Although party size matters, the East-West difference relating to the focus of representation does not stem from the PDS alone. The slightly stronger emphasis on representing the country in the East is caused by the Eastern MPs from the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Christian Democrats (CDU). Directly elected Western MPs at both levels are split between their role as representatives of the whole country or of their district, even when the mode of election is controlled for. Directly elected Eastern members of the national parliament (MNP) clearly favour their constituency. The members of the state parliaments (MSPs), however, do not focus as much on district, but rather underscore the aspects of representing the whole country and – to a lesser extent – their own voters.⁹

While only subtle distinctions appear between East and West with regard to the focus of representation, the differences result from structural conditions rather than opposing concepts of representation. The stronger orientation towards the district among Eastern MNPs could be understood as an effect of their view of the mandate as the representation of special Eastern interests, which – in their view – still require particular attention.

Surveys conducted on MPs in West Germany before unification showed in general a stronger orientation towards the district among state legislators. This was explained by the smaller size of their constituencies, which is likely associated with having a closer relationship and greater integration [Patzelt 1993: 137]. This relationship does not, however, appear in the data from the project research. Most MPs at both levels see themselves as representatives of the whole country. But given that the question on the focus of representation was designed as a forced choice question, compelling respondents to make a decision between alternatives, the outcome could be interpreted as an attitude of putting 'shared interests first'. It implies that, in cases of conflict, the MP is expected to evaluate particular constituency interests as secondary. When related to incumbency, the proportion of MPs that represent the whole country increases and the proportion of constituency-oriented MPs diminishes, while support for the two other foci of representation remains stable. This relationship is not observed in the Eastern state parliaments.

MPs attempt to be nominated in an SMD *and* on a party list to increase their chances of getting elected. This system of election is used for the Bundestag and for most of the state parliaments in the survey, except for Baden-Württemberg and Saarland.

⁸ It should be noted that the PDS has no parliamentary representation in West German legislatures and only two MPs in the Bundestag. Conversely, the Greens are not represented in East German state legislatures, and the FDP won mandates only in one out of five state legislatures (Saxony). Therefore, only CDU and SPD are represented in all eleven parliaments included in the survey.

⁹ Whenever no distinction between MNPs and MSPs is made, and unless otherwise indicated, the findings reported refer to *all* MPs.

It is likely that the MPs who see themselves mostly as representatives of their district devote more time to constituency work, and this is also a matter of role perception as a deputy. Therefore, on the one hand there are MPs who are found to emphasise work within the parliament, and on the other hand there are MPs who are preoccupied with activities in the district, such as networking, offering services and explaining policies on the ground; in short, connecting parliament to the electorate. But such a distinction is more a question of graded differences than one of a clear-cut decision. When the MPs are classified into three categories – ‘parliament workers’, ‘constituency workers’ and those claiming an equal distribution between parliament and district work – it is evident that almost half of the deputies devote more time to work in parliament. As such, German MPs see themselves mainly as ‘parliament workers’, but working at the ground level also appears to be important. Deputies from the Eastern Länder still devote more time to parliamentary work as opposed to district work when compared to their Western counterparts, which confirms earlier findings from the mid-1990s [Patzelt 2001: 72].

There is no big difference in the distribution of working hours between MPs elected in SMDs and those elected on party lists. It seems that focusing one’s work on the constituency is unrelated to the mode of election, but it is closely related to the MP’s perception of representing primarily the constituency. However, the direction of the relationship is somewhat ambiguous. It could be argued that the more an MP works in the constituency the higher the amount of claiming district representation, or the reverse could be true. The first interpretation is supported by the fact that Cramer’s V is higher in the East. Therefore, MPs in the West may be linked to their constituency by slightly better developed networks which require the exertion of less personal effort by the MP. Their Eastern counterparts still have to invest more time into these networks,¹⁰ and when they do they are more likely to have a district orientation. Thus, the relationship to the constituency is also built up *between* elections.

While the focus of representation is closely related to the distribution of working time, it is only loosely linked to role-perception views on politics as an occupation. The overwhelming majority of the MPs in the East and the West perceive politics as a genuine occupation. Nevertheless, only a minority of MPs had planned for a long-term political career when they first entered parliament, and the proportion is even lower in the East. When PPGs are controlled for it becomes evident that the PDS makes the difference. However, the party matters equally in the East and the West in terms of career orientation. The research results showed that deputies from the two major parties tend to focus more on their political career, whereas MPs from the Greens and the Socialists displayed the lowest ambitions.

The number of MNPs that plan a political career from the beginning increas-

¹⁰ This is supported by the fact that Eastern MPs who once belonged to a civil society organisation often serve as members of their boards or even as their presidents, while such a relationship is nowhere near as strong in the West. This is probably related to the rebuilding of civil society in the East, where representative elites are likely to also be found in prominent positions in civil society organisations.

Table 2. Demand for party discipline by focus of representation (%)

	All MPs (n=794)	East German MPs (n=384)	West German MPs (n=410)	East German MPs without PDS (n=281)	MPs from PDS (n=103)
Party	66	61	70	81	40
Voters	37	23	53	32	14
Constituency	58	55	60	61	11
Whole country	60	52	69	64	14

es in relation to how low their incumbency is (Cramer's V: 0.37, $p < 0.01$), but this relationship is not found for MSPs. Holding a mandate in the Bundestag has since 1990 increasingly come to be viewed as a starting point for a political career, both in East and West Germany. Generally, once in parliament, most MPs in the East and the West would like to stand for re-election. However, the chances of getting re-elected depend both on how an MP behaves within the caucus and the MP's interaction with the electorate, and this points to the relationship between the focus of representation and party discipline. The demand that MPs toe the party line when it comes to votes in the plenary or in the committees can clash with the preferred focus of representation, as the interests of the PPG may not always be perceived as matching, for example, the interests of the constituency. To examine this we built an index of demand for PPG discipline.¹¹

MPs that see themselves as representatives of their party are found to have the highest demand for PPG discipline, probably because party discipline is considered to be in the interest of the party, while MPs that are representatives of their voters are found to be significantly below average in this respect (see Table 2). Furthermore, the majority of district- and country-oriented deputies support PPG discipline. Therefore, one could argue that many MPs perceive PPG discipline as an essential mechanism for achieving political aims also for those they feel they ought to be representing foremost. Only in the East is representing voters seen to being tense relationship to party discipline. Among the PPGs only the deputies of PDS reject PPG discipline in the majority – no matter whom they represent.

This review of several aspects of role perceptions has revealed one clear tendency: most of the differences between Eastern and Western MPs are due to the distinctions of the party system or to slight differences in the general structures of opportunity than to fundamentally divided role perceptions. With regard to the focus

¹¹ This additive index was built out of two items. The first item measures the demand for coherent voting behaviour when important decisions are concerned, the second one, once recoded, measures the opposition to more autonomous voting for the individual PPG member. Respondents can reach between two and eight points on the party discipline index. MPs with six or more points are considered as strong supporters of party discipline, while all others show only weak support. The cutting point is identical with that after z-transformation when respondents above average are counted as favouring strong party discipline.

of representation, differences are somehow secondary in comparison with the overwhelming preference for representing the whole country – PPG affiliation and election as a district or a list MP are more decisive than East-West differences. A similar picture appears in terms of the distribution of work between parliament and constituency. Some tendencies that occur in the West are rather pronounced in the East, for example, tendencies found in the relationship between the focus of representation and party discipline, and it is this aspect that will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Party unity at stake: attitudes towards parliamentary party groups and parliament as an institution

While the relationship with the public is of crucial importance for deputies, much of their everyday activity relates to parliamentary work. The parliament as an institution, with its rules and procedures, consequently shapes the perceptions and the behaviour of its members. In the survey, we tried to capture MPs' views on parliamentary procedures and parliamentary reform through a set of questions related to the importance of parliament, problems of serving as an MP and reform proposals. A related topic, also covered in the questionnaire, is the relationship between the individual MP and the caucus. Do noticeable differences exist between MPs from East and West Germany regarding the relationship to their own PPG? Is it possible to detect varying degrees of party cohesion between caucuses?

There is a huge body of literature on party cohesion and party discipline and the topic has regained academic interest during the past couple of years [see e.g. Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999; Hazan 2003]. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two concepts more often than not seems insufficient. Another striking phenomenon is how much emphasis has been put on MPs' voting behaviour, and roll call analysis in particular, while other important aspects that could be associated with party cohesion (such as shared politics and policy attitudes) have been neglected. As Hazan points out: "examining voting behaviour is not enough, because we must look at (...) what takes place before voting decisions are made" [Hazan 2003a: 8]. In the light of such advice, this section presents an examination of the various orientations MPs maintain towards their parliamentary group, and which are interpreted as indicators of 'party unity'. For the purpose of this article, party unity comprises 'party discipline' (united voting plus directly related attitudes) and 'party cohesion' (shared attitudes).¹² Given that the analysis at hand is based solely on survey data, it also draws on reported voting behaviour¹³ and the index on party

¹² It should be noted that, as a consequence, party unity is used here as the *genus proximum* for discipline and cohesion, and it is not used as a distinct analytical category as suggested elsewhere [Linek and Rakušanová 2002: 48-49].

¹³ The item reads: 'Did you ever vote against your own PPG in an important vote even though voting with the PPG was expected'.

discipline (see above) to measure party discipline. Party cohesion can encompass shared political orientations (comp. section 4), but here we are looking more specifically at attitudes on parliament as an institution.

Parties in the German parliaments traditionally exhibit relatively unified behaviour. Faction splits and mergers happen rarely, inter-faction mobility is usually low, and voting against one's own PPG is considered a serious violation of internal norms unless issues of high ethical importance ('questions of conscience') are at stake.¹⁴ Still, some disunity did occur during the first term of the new state legislatures (1990–94), when parliamentary democracy in East Germany was still in its formative period. Since then, however, the situation has changed and the new parliaments have become much like their counterparts Western.¹⁵

When considering the initial differences between East and West it is highly relevant whether the evident changes in parliamentary party discipline are also reflected in MPs' perceptions. Our findings confirm the actual voting behaviour in at least one respect: a much higher proportion of East compared to West German MPs report having at least once voted against their PPG in an important vote, even though they were expected to adhere to the party line. Obviously, longstanding MPs report deviating from their party group more frequently than newly elected MPs. It nonetheless comes as a surprise that statistically significant differences also exist between newcomers. Regardless of how long respondents held a parliamentary seat, the percentage of East German MPs with a record of deviant voting was always higher than among West Germans. Even more surprisingly, the gap between the two groups is barely shrinks even when the PDS are excluded from the analysis.

Although the proportion of dissenters increases the more the notion of party discipline is challenged (Cramer's V: 0.29, $p < 0.01$), it is striking how widespread the phenomenon of (occasional) PPG disloyalty has become. Four out of ten strong supporters of party discipline have dissented from their faction in an important vote at least once during their parliamentary career. Even among the respondents who showed maximal support for party discipline this figure amounts to 27%.¹⁶ While the East-West divergence in reported voting discipline is not caused by differences between the East and the West German party system, the weaker support for party discipline among Eastern MPs is clearly related to the PDS. The low party discipline among Socialist MPs may appear puzzling at first glance, especially when one takes into account the history of the PDS as a hegemonic state party, but it somewhat corresponds to the heterogeneous composition of its caucuses. On the one hand the PDS recruits its MPs from among the GDR sub-elites, on the other hand it deliber-

¹⁴ It should be noted that the situation was rather different during the first two terms of the Bundestag when up to eight factions existed in the national parliament and when the party system had not yet been stabilised. The relevant figures are found in Schindler [1999: 938–42, 1781–87]. For a general analysis of the structural incentives for party cohesion and party discipline in Germany see Patzelt [2003].

¹⁵ For empirical evidence see Davidson-Schmich [2003].

¹⁶ Maximum support for party discipline is given when respondents reach all eight points on the party discipline scale.

Table 3. Demanded and reported party discipline by PPG (%)

	Strong demand ^{*17}	Party discipline		
		Reported	Demanded but not reported (as % of PPG members with strong demand)	Demanded but not reported (as % of all PPG members)
CDU (n=330/355)	59	46	45	27
FDP (n=51/51)	51	41	46	24
SPD (n=305/326)	73	54	38	27
B90 (n=42/44)	48	71	20	10
PDS (n=118/128)	21	35	46	9
Total (n=851/907)	57	49	41	23

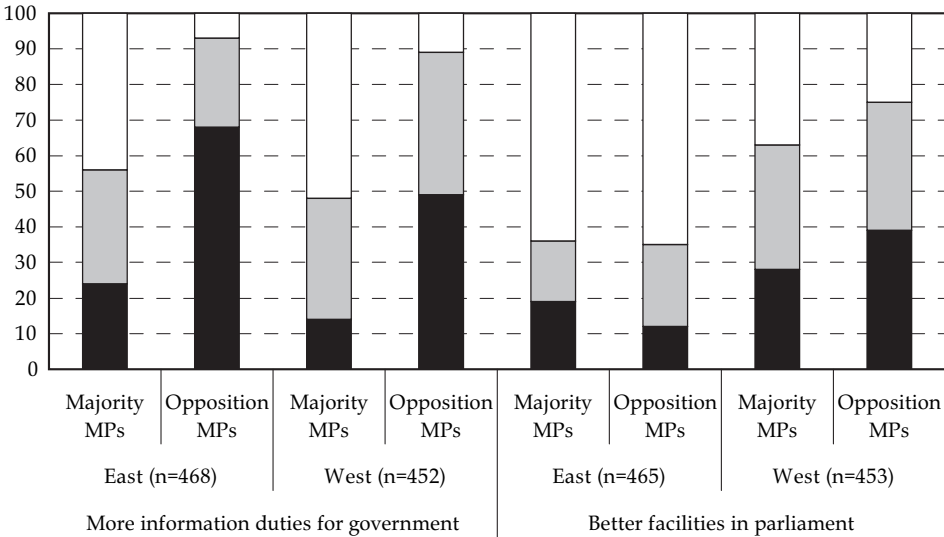
* See footnote 11 on the construction of the party discipline index and the cutting point.

ately promotes candidates affiliated with certain groups in society and with specific socio-demographic features, for example young candidates, women and also non-party members.

While reported PPG discipline is lowest among the Socialists, it is well above average for parliamentarians from the Greens. Yet their deputies do not consider strong party discipline to be particularly important, as unity in voting may be taken for granted. The Greens consequently displayed the lowest proportion of inconsistent responses, i.e. MPs who demand strong party discipline while having themselves dissented from the PPG in at least one important vote. The strongest demand for party discipline was voiced by the Social Democrats, although their reported discipline is only slightly higher than the average. In spite of this, inconsistent responses are no more common among the SPD than among Christian Democrats and Liberals. As illustrated in the last column of Table 3, one out of four respondents from those three long-established parties (or rather their caucuses) demands what he himself or she herself is not willing to fully comply with: party discipline. The figures for PDS and Greens are much lower but for different reasons. Whereas

¹⁷ It is worth noting that Czech MPs in 2000 showed much more support for party discipline, though the Rice Index for the Czech Chamber of Deputies is considerably lower than for German parliaments [Linek and Rakušanová 2002: 35 and 50-51]. The lesson to be learned from these contrasting cases at two slightly different points in time seems to be that the less party discipline that exists, the stronger the demand for it, and the more party discipline is adhered to, the less it is appreciated.

Figure 1. Attitudes towards two parliamentary reform proposals by East/West German and majority/opposition MPs (%)



among the Green PPGs the demand for discipline is much lower than what is actually practiced (reported), among the PDS there are few candidates for inconsistency, because the voting discipline is relatively low.

How relevant are PPGs to the differences between East and West when the focus of the analysis turns to MPs' views on parliament as institution? East-West differences exist to some degree – and so do variations between PPGs – but we find the more visible dividing line between government and opposition MPs. While two out of three MPs in an opposition party view the influence of parliament as one the decline, this view is held by only 43% of deputies from the government benches. The gulf between majority and minority MPs corresponds with the logic of parliamentary democracy based on the nearly complete fusion of the executive and the legislative powers (Bagehot), or in other words on the notion of the 'governing majority'.

Still, out of the four reform proposals deputies were asked their opinion on, only one is a source of serious controversy between the parliamentary majority and the opposition: the quest for stronger reporting obligations for the government (see Figure 1). As expected, members of the majority PPGs attach little importance to this reform issue, while for MPs from the opposition it ranks first in importance. Huge differences between government and opposition MPs also exist within every single parliamentary party. For example, the Social Democrats in the opposition are

much more in favour of such a reform than the Social Democratic members of the governing PPGs.

While the right of parliament to gain earlier and more comprehensive information on government activities marks the dividing line between MPs from the governing and the opposition parliamentary parties, East and West German MPs are split over the importance of work resources. Whereas better resources, be it more personnel or better parliamentary facilities, are of some importance to many West German MPs, this is clearly not the case with MPs in the new federal states (see Figure 1). It seems that East German deputies do not attach much meaning to institutional support. This contrasts with the frequent complaints over insufficient time for reflecting on political problems and for private life. Judging from the experience of one of the best-equipped parliaments in the world, the US Congress, it comes as a surprise that particularly East German MPs do not expect benefits from improved work facilities. They seem therefore to neglect a relevant part of the institutional conditions that 'frame' their activities as elected representatives of the people.

With regard to members of the Bundestag, the item battery on parliamentary reform provides a rare opportunity for a comparison over time. Therefore, the survey also used questions reproduced from an earlier survey of German national MPs carried out at the end of the 1980s by Dietrich Herzog and his research team. The findings are intriguing as they show both high levels of continuity and tremendous changes over a time span of fifteen years. Almost the same proportion of national MPs as a decade and a half ago consider more information rights for the Bundestag and better public relations work as the most urgent reform issues. The opposite is true for the two other reform proposals at stake. Whereas a considerable proportion of the members of the 11th Bundestag voiced strong support for better parliamentary resources and for more rights to individual deputies, these are no longer matters of priority. The parliamentary infrastructure still concerns at least some members of the Bundestag, though less so the state legislators. Nevertheless, the status of the individual MP, which spurred much debate at the time and even led to rulings from the constitutional court, has completely vanished from the reform agenda.

The shift of the focus of parliamentary reform, as illustrated by the figures in Table 4, takes us back to the relationship between MPs and their factions. While every second deputy feels that individual MPs are hardly ever capable of changing the status quo, in the new data this no longer results in a quest for institutional change (in favour of the MP as an individual), which may have been the case in the past. Instead, MPs in 2003–4 turned to their parliamentary parties but at the same time they expressed less support for party discipline. They even expressed the freedom to dissent on rare occasions from their PPG in an important vote.

The analysis in this section places a question mark behind the seemingly clear-cut issue of party discipline in German parliaments,¹⁸ albeit only at the level of atti-

¹⁸ Recent anecdotic evidence justifies the question mark. In March 2005 Heide Simonis failed to obtain re-election as Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein in four subsequent parliamen-

Table 4. Parliamentary reforms considered to be most urgent by MNPs (%)

	11 th Bundestag 1988/89*	15 th Bundestag*** 2003/04 (West/East)
Stronger reporting obligations of government to parliament	30	29 (28/34)
Improved public presentation of parliament	37	38 (38/37)
More parliamentary staff and better facilities in parliament	35	19 (19/20)
Extended chances of political initiatives and more speaking time for individual MPs	39**	6 (5/7)

* Data taken from Herzog et al. [1990: 126].

** Item phrased slightly differently: strengthening of the position of individual MPs.

*** n = 154 to 156.

tudes. More importantly, it reveals the varying degrees of relevance that the regional background of MPs has on different dimensions of party unity. Party discipline, both as reported and as demanded by parliamentarians, is still much stronger among West German deputies. The East-West gulf is not bridged even when controlling for the PDS. In sharp contrast to the findings on party discipline, the regional background is of limited importance for party cohesion. Overall, PPG affiliation is highly relevant for both discipline and cohesion, though in some instances the majority-opposition divide is more decisive. The next section will examine whether similar patterns can be found in yet another dimension of party unity: shared political orientations.

Political attitudes: convictions, politics and policies

Three types of political orientations will be discussed in this section, so it is first necessary to sketch how basic convictions, attitudes on politics, and policy preferences are inter-related. Political convictions can be understood as the very foundations of political attitudes. As such they should allow for a proper distinction between parties, while at the same time they are capable of serving as a formula for integration within parties. Generally speaking, this is less the case with political procedures. Questions of decision-making (politics) are usually only of limited use in party competition. In addition, some of them touch upon the basic rules of the political game and therefore should find broad agreement across party lines. Finally, policy preferences are frequently rooted in political convictions. As these prefer-

tary votes because, most likely, a member of her own PPG dissented. In the state legislature in Saxony, on various occasions at the end of 2004 (most likely) members of the governing coalition, made up of CDU and SPD, voted for candidates of the extreme right NPD.

ences are more closely connected to current political conflicts they can be expected to be the biggest source of controversy between PPGs.

In the survey, there are two items that can be considered as measuring 'basic convictions': a forced choice question on freedom versus equality, and the self-ranking of MPs on a ten-point left-right scale. The latter is obviously not a political conviction in itself but rather a proxy for it. First of all, there is virtually no difference in the self-ranking of MPs in the East and the West. This is *prima facie* a rather puzzling finding because the party systems in each part of Germany are different, and it could be expected that more leftwing positions would be found among East German MPs. The explanation for the similarity between East and West comes from the long-established (parliamentary) parties. Their East German members position themselves more to the right than their fellow PPG members in the West, on average by almost half a scale point. This difference can be attributed to the type of party competition: with the PDS as a dedicated leftist competitor, East German MPs from the other parties may feel the need to distance themselves from the Socialists and therefore opt for a more rightist position on the left-right scale.

While the general relationship between PPGs on the left-right MP scale offers no surprises, an interesting East-West difference does surface. Generally, among

Table 5. MPs' self-ranking and the ranking of their party on a ten-point left-right scale by PPG (means & standard deviations)

	Self-ranking of MPs		Party ranking by MPs	
	Means	STDDEV	Means	STDDEV
CDU				
East (n=175)	6.47	1.12	6.20	1.08
West (n=174/173)	6.09	1.18	6.29	1.06
FDP				
East (n=15)	5.60	1.12	5.67	0.90
West (n=34)	5.29	1.27	5.62	0.78
SPD				
East(n=129/130)	4.12	1.50	4.43	1.18
West(n=191/194)	3.64	1.22	4.37	1.17
B90				
East*	–	–	–	–
West (n=39)	3.56	1.07	3.87	1.03
PDS				
East (n=128/127)	2.58	0.95	2.76	0.97
West*	–	–	–	–
Total				
East (n=445)	4.68	2.02	4.77	1.79
West (n=450/452)	4.69	1.69	5.08	1.47

* not reported because $n < 15$.

Eastern MPs almost no difference exists between the actual position of deputies and the perceived party position, but the West German MPs tend to see themselves somewhat to the left of their party. This observation is particularly striking in the case of the Social Democrats, an obvious sign that the programme changes introduced by the party leadership after winning the 1998 Bundestag elections have not been fully accepted among the party's state legislators in particular.

The position on the left-right scale strongly correlates with the forced choice question on freedom and equality ($\text{Eta}^2: .33$; $p < 0.01$). More egalitarian views coincide with rather leftist positions. The 'egalitarians' among the MPs have a mean of 3.2 on the left-right scale, whereas those that give freedom priority over equality are far more on the right (mean: 5.0). The differences between East and West are modest, with MPs in and from the new Länder having slightly more egalitarian convictions. Since no East-West divide exists within the two major parliamentary parties and the Liberal PPGs, the PDS is clearly an outlier here. Only a relative majority of their MPs express a preference for freedom, with 28–29% respectively either egalitarian or undecided.

East-West differences in political convictions are small compared to inter-party divisions, but how much does this picture also apply in the case of *policy preferences*? The survey contained four questions explicitly referring to politics: on the importance of compromise and on the role of parties in provoking conflict (the consent-conflict dimensions), and on direct democracy and on political leadership (input-output dimensions). Strong support for two of these questions was observed among the respondents: first in support for compromise, but also in support for direct democracy. The two other items are sources of controversy.

Statistically significant differences between East and West German deputies exist over the issue of the importance of direct democracy and over the statement that parties unnecessarily provoke political conflicts. MPs in the East support the former and agree with the latter to a larger extent than their counterparts in the West. However, in the case of direct democracy this divide stems from the different PPG composition in both parts of the country. Inter-party differences are strongest here ($\text{Eta}^2: .24$; $p < 0.01$), with the Christian Democrats split over this politics issue and all other factions (very) strongly in favour. The slightly more positive attitude of Eastern Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals towards direct democracy might be interpreted as a legacy of the peaceful revolution in 1989, when citizens' active involvement in politics spurred the process of democratisation. PPG affiliation is also significant for MPs' attitudes in relation to the statement that a democracy in the long run is only possible when strong political leadership wards off conflicting group interests.

Leaving out the PDS as a specifically Eastern party, overall the regional background is only meaningful for one of the politics-related questions: the item on party democracy. Almost fifteen years after unification, East German MPs are still slightly more sceptical about the role of political parties. However, a closer look at the differences by PPG reveals that a significant gap exists only in the case of the

Social Democrats. PPG differences seem to have on the whole a much stronger impact than regional background in the input-output dimension of politics. Given that (parliamentary) parties are so relevant to policy preferences, we would expect them to be almost dominant with regard to policy orientations, as these lie at the heart of what parties regularly dispute over.

Out of the roughly one dozen questions on policy preferences in the survey, this analysis limits itself to looking at just two dimensions, which may be considered the most relevant for testing the stated hypotheses.¹⁹ The first dimension refers to the support for state activity, determined through two items – on job creation and on the responsibility of citizens for social security – combined into an unweighted additive index.²⁰ The second index comprises two questions, both of which refer to a libertarian-authoritarian, or rather freedom versus security dimension.²¹ In the case of both indexes the items have a strong positive correlation (with Pearson's r : 0.27 for the security-freedom index, and 0.51 for the state activity index).

East German MPs differ from their West German colleagues in relation to both dimensions by taking slightly more pro-state and pro-freedom stands. At least for the security versus freedom dimension the positions are reversed once deputies from the PDS, with their strong pro-civil rights views, are excluded from the analysis. The differences between the old and the new states are overridden by lines of conflict between parliamentary parties. The PPG division is somewhat pronounced, and it appears to be stronger on the security-freedom dimension (η^2 : 0.52; $p < 0.01$) than on the state activity index (η^2 : 0.39; $p < 0.01$). On state intervention, the biggest mean difference is between Liberals and Socialists, with Christian Democrats close to the FDP and Social Democrats almost exactly in the middle. The SPD is the only PPG whose Eastern members are less positive about state activity than its members in the West. Furthermore, the SPD is distinctive in that intra-party differences between Easterners and Westerners exist on both dimensions. On the security-freedom dimension, PPGs are grouped differently. Here the Christian Democrats with their pro-security orientation are set far apart from the other parliamentary parties.

So far in this section, party unity – as related to political attitudes – has been examined by comparing PPGs and by studying their homogeneity. The next step in the analysis changes the perspective from PPGs as a given parliamentary entity to individual MPs in search of the right group to join in parliament. The more homogeneous a PPG is, and the more PPGs differ from one another, the easier it is to assign an MP to his or her PPG. Therefore, the percentage of MPs correctly assigned

¹⁹ As with any such analysis, the selection of items to some extent determines the results. It must be noted that by covering two dimensions the most divisive issue between East and West German MPs is not included: the introduction of nationwide, centralised A-level exams.

²⁰ The items are 'Creating and preserving jobs is primarily a task of the state' and 'The state should give citizens more responsibility for their social security'. The latter item was recoded.

²¹ The items are 'Considering the threat posed by terrorism, the restriction of basic rights is acceptable' and 'Germany should restrict immigration from non-EU countries'.

Table 6. MPs correctly assigned to their PPG by discriminant analysis (%)^{*}

		Politics Input/Output	Policy I: state activity	Policies Policy II: security / freedom	Policy I & II combined
West	CDU (n=169 to 175)	71	90	84	86
	SPD (n=187 to 194)	67	57	79	81
	Wilk's Lambda first function** (p<0.01)	0.78	0.67	0.49	0.41
East	CDU (n=171 to 177)	74	90	85	81
	SPD (n=125 to 129)	27	24	33	48
	PDS (n=115 to 1119)	71	66	75	80
	Wilk's Lambda first function** (p<0.01)	0.68	0.53	0.43	0.36

Note: The results for Liberals and Greens are not reported here because, due to their small size (low a priori probability), each of them would be assigned to their closest partner even if they could be relatively well discriminated [Klecka 1980: 46–47].

^{*} The leave-one-out method was used to assign the observations. As a result, the discriminating functions are generated out of N-1 observations, and the left-out case is classified on this basis.

^{**} Wilk's Lambda measures the amount of variance within each group that is left unexplained by the discriminant function. That means the lower the Lambda the better the classification.

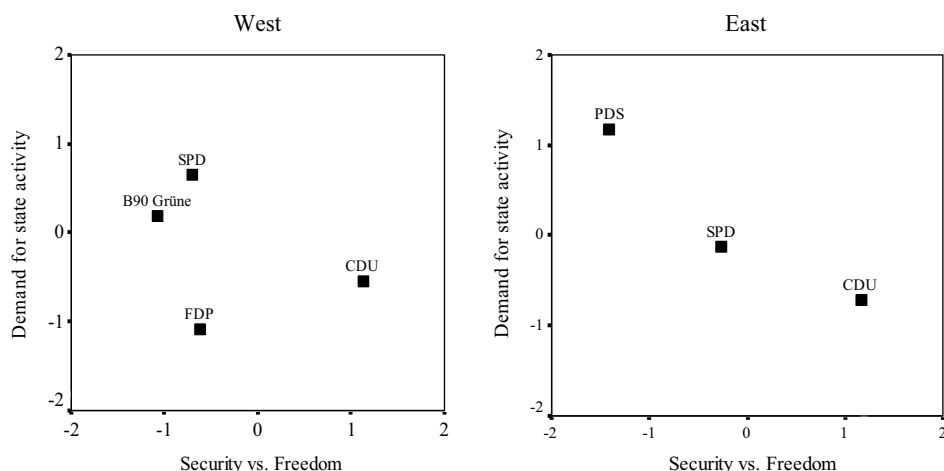
to their PPG is used here as one indicator of PPG unity. This approach requires use of discriminant analysis, a statistical tool that makes it possible to examine the simultaneous influence of several variables on the distinction between PPGs, and to maximize the probability of correctly assigning observations to their pre-determined groups [Klecka 1980]. The analysis is performed using three sets of variables that separately encompass attitudes on politics²² and the two policy dimensions relating to state activity and to security/freedom.²³

The first result, equally valid for East and West, is the difference in the ability of each of the three sets of variables to generate a correct classification of MPs (see Table 6). As illustrated by Wilk's Lambda, the index on politics contributes least to explaining party differences. In contrast to politics, the two policy dimensions, especially if combined, serve the purpose much better. Interestingly, the discriminating power of all three dimensions is generally higher for MPs from the new Länder. This contrast is most pronounced in the state activity dimension.

Among the PPGs, Christian Democrats in the West are slightly more homogeneous than their colleagues from the SPD on two of the three dimensions. Only on

²² It comprises the following two items: 'In the long run, democracy is only possible when strong leadership repels conflicting group interests' (output) and 'Referenda (initiated by the people) are a necessary supplement for representative democracy' (input).

²³ For the wording of the items, see footnotes 20 and 21.

Figure 2. Territorial map of group centroids for PPGs (all MPs)

Note: The results for Liberals and Greens in the East are not reported here because of their small size.

the state activity dimension are they substantially more united than the Social Democrats. A somewhat different picture emerges in the East. Whereas the CDU appears just as homogeneous as in the West and represents by far the most integrated party, the SPD seems rather more heterogeneous. The majority of Social Democrats are not properly classified in relation to any of the dimensions.²⁴ Most of the SPD deputies wrongly assigned appear as Christian Democrats, but except for the state activity dimension the share of those classified as Socialists is only marginally lower. The evident difficulty in assigning East German Social Democrats correctly somewhat reflects the precarious position their party occupies in the middle of the regional party system, which can be illustrated by mapping the relative distance between parties in a two-dimensional space (see Figure 2).²⁵

This constellation causes centrifugal tendencies within the SPD. As a result, some of its members lean towards policy preferences characteristic for the CDU, whereas others tend towards positions frequently held by the PDS. This is simply

²⁴ It is worth noting that the discriminant analysis refers not only to the homogeneity within a party but also to the relative distance between parties. That is why the figures presented in Table 6 should not be regarded as the sole indicator for the homogeneity of a party.

²⁵ Therefore, the two policy dimensions were combined and rotated in order to obtain two discriminant functions, which make up the axis of the system. For these it is possible to calculate the average score of every PPG, i.e. 'the group centroids', resulting from each score their MPs get on the functions.

not possible in the West due to the lack of a strong leftwing party. This kind of intra-party division is also reflected in the coalition preferences. The majority of East German SPD deputies are able to find at least one acceptable coalition alternative. The Christian Democrats (with a minimal acceptance rate of 79%) are somewhat favoured as a prospective partner in government over the Socialists (58%) – a difference that corresponds very well with the results of the discriminant analysis. The greater homogeneity of CDU and PDS parliamentarians in the East is likewise a reflection of their parties' positions in the regional party system. Unlike the Social Democrats they can be incorrectly assigned only to one other party: the SPD. Indeed, assigning Christian Democrats to the PDS and vice versa is a rare occurrence and is no more frequent than the mutual acceptance as coalition partners, which is clearly below 10%.

The overall picture emerging from the survey data is that West and East Germans rarely show strong dissent over the various aspects of political orientations. Significant differences can be found on some policy issues. However, (parliamentary) party membership has a much stronger impact on all three dimensions of political attitudes discussed in this chapter. While PPGs are relevant, they are anything but united on a number of issues. Within the parties both East-West divisions and general patterns of heterogeneity emerge. The Social Democrats, especially their East German parliamentary groups, are the most affected by a lack of inner-party cohesion on political attitudes.

Conclusion

This article explored the attitudes of East and West German MPs on a variety of issues thirteen years after unification. Of particular interest in this respect are the deputies elected in East Germany, where the re-emergence of parliamentary life happened amidst an equally rapid and comprehensive transformation process, characterised by the massive import of institutions, elites and norms already established in Western Germany. Unlike their colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe, German MPs in the new federal states were faced with pre-established structures, and they received enormous institutional support. East Germany must therefore be considered a specific case.

However, the entry of MPs socialised in a communist regime into new institutional settings is also interesting from the perspective of EU enlargement, for which the integration of representative elites constitutes a major challenge. In the processes of unification and enlargement both, Western institutions are joined by MPs from a different cultural background, where some other form of institutional logic existed. Integration requires that MPs both adapt themselves in response to the institutional challenges and also modify the institutional settings in order to make them better fit the political and social context in the East. Without this, either the too rigid institutions would force MPs to become fully assimilated, or the institutions would lose their capacity to shape the behaviour of the political actors.

In reference to the hypotheses presented above, the key findings will now be summarised in order to estimate the overall level of integration between MPs from the new and the old federal states. The first hypothesis emerged from the assumption of greater East-West integration when institutional incentives are strong, as could be the case for role perceptions. Less integration seems likely when social contexts are different and institutional incentives are low, as is the case with political attitudes. An interpretation of the results of the 2003–4 survey shows that the level of integration does not depend that much on whether role perceptions or political attitudes are compared. While MPs from the new and the old Länder are somewhat similar in the preferences they expressed regarding the focus of representation, the same is also true for basic convictions, most politics items, and even some policy orientations. Interestingly, even for topics that could be associated with different socialisation processes or related to the differing socio-economic situations in East and West Germany (e.g. the demand for state activity) only a moderate amount of dissimilarity could be discovered. In contrast, striking differences exist with regard to party discipline, where one could have expected a high degree of similarity given that normative expectations are well established.

East-West divisions, as pointed out at various points in the analysis, may emerge from two sources: from a gap that cuts across the PPGs, or from the existence of the PDS as the East German equivalent of a post-communist successor party. The very fact that the PDS produces some of the variance between East and West is not meant to imply that these differences should be overlooked. On the contrary, the PDS is the most visible reminder that, more than a dozen years after German unification, East and West have not yet fully converged. In general, differences between representatives in the new and the old Länder prove important in relation to some dimensions, and are sometimes more pronounced as intra-party and sometimes as inter-party differences. However, they are not the main differences even when we distinguish between different dimensions such as role perceptions and political orientations. Therefore, our first hypothesis is not confirmed.

Conversely, the second hypothesis seems to fit nicely with the empirical findings: (parliamentary) parties matter far beyond the realm of policy preferences. PPG affiliation is important for attitudes on politics and for role perceptions. The position of one PPG and its distance from other caucuses differs depending on the dimension of comparison. Whereas MPs' political attitudes are largely a matter of party ideology, role perceptions are influenced more by institutional constraints such as the electoral system. Despite the at times pronounced differences, there is some common ground between the parliamentary parties, too. Almost all MPs agree, for example, on the general preservation of the federal system in Germany and, more importantly, on the need to seek compromise. The general consent on the latter topic, especially, indicates the prevalence of a unified elite in Germany [Hoffmann-Lange 2001: 206]. This kind of basic consent among elites has not only been crucial to the stability of German democracy since the Second World War, it is also considered to be a *conditio sine qua non* for successful consolidation in the post-communist countries of Central and East Europe [Higley and Lengyel 2000: 1].

The assumption that the observed distinctiveness of PPGs is to some degree based upon intra-party homogeneity leads us to the third hypothesis that parliamentary groups represent cohesive actors with strong party discipline and party cohesion. However, the findings from the survey reveal instead considerable intra-party differences if not dissent. They extend to quite a number of policy and politics issues, and they are even reflected in the frequent dissenting votes reported by the respondents. Whether altogether they indicate changes in the relationship between MPs and parliamentary parties is an open question as long as the effects on the observed voting behaviour (like a lower Rice Index) remain unclear.

However, some of the intra-party differences illustrate one of the most surprising findings from the interviews: the 'alienation' of German MPs from their own party. While this process is silent and somewhat hidden, the evidence for it is substantial: In addition to the dissensions and the low support for party discipline, few MPs considered themselves as representatives primarily of their party, few reported that party activities were decisive for their nomination, and almost every second deputy was critical about the role of parties in provoking conflicts. Such figures remind us of the fact that parties "are internal coalitions, comprising factions as well as fragmented and non-aligned tendencies" [Hazan 2003a: 8]. They must be interpreted against the background of recruitment processes that are monopolised by the parties. Although MPs owe almost every position in their political career to their party, many present themselves as somewhat detached from it, whether in an effort to emphasise their autonomy or as a response to perceived anti-party sentiments in the electorate.

Judging from the test of the three hypotheses, how much integration of East and West German MPs is there? Whether differences are considered small or big considerably depends on one's expectations. Those who focus on the institutional framework may have expected greater similarity here, whereas researchers who see MPs' orientations as rooted in socialisation must be surprised that both groups of deputies share so many views. Considering these contrasting approaches, no definite answer to the question is possible here. When differences between PPGs are found overall to be more pronounced than East-West divisions, this suggests that elite convergence after unification has occurred to some degree. And this remains true even if the situation is much more complex, with Eastern and Western deputies being somewhat estranged on some dimensions and issues while rather close on others.

At the same time, the social experiment of German unification since 1990 offers no blueprints for elite convergence on the European level, as integration occurred under extremely favourable conditions. Judging from our data on MPs' biographies and political careers, parliamentary stabilisation and professionalisation occurred with much greater speed in East Germany than in other post-communist societies. Nevertheless, the direction of developments seems to be roughly the same. This preliminary evidence suggests that the convergence of representative elites in Europe is not only an effect of the transformation path but also a matter of time.

MICHAEL EDINGER works as a researcher and project co-ordinator in the Sonderforschungsbereich SFB 580 at Jena University. He is currently working on political elites and the transformation in Eastern Germany. His recent publications include *Representative Elites in Post-Communist Settings* (with H. Best, Jena 2003) and *A Critical Juncture? The 2004 European Elections and the Making of a Supranational Political Elite* (*The Journal of Legislative Studies* 11 (2005)).

LARS VOGEL is currently writing his MA thesis on political elites and is working as a research assistant in the Sonderforschungsbereich SFB 580 at Jena University. His main research interests include parliamentarians in Eastern and Western Germany, political participation and regional identities.

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Appendix 1. Response rates by parliamentary level and by government-opposition affiliation

	Number of deputies	Number of interviews	Response rate [RR] (%)	RR for governing PPGs (%)	RR for opposition PPGs (%)
All state parliaments	1.001	765	76.4	71.5	83.1
East German state parliaments	482	384	79.7	74.2	88.6
West German state parliaments	378	265	70.1	62.7	78.5
Berlin Chamber of Deputies (West and East German MPs)	141	116	82.3	84.4	79.7
European Parliament (German MEPs)*	99	33	33.3	–	–
Deutscher Bundestag	603	156	25.9	26.8	24.9
Total	1703	954	56.0	56.0**	59.1**

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* Disregarded for the purpose of this article.

** Basis: All MPs in the sample parliaments without MEPs.

Appendix 2. Response rates by parliamentary party groups and by East and West German MPs

	Number of deputies	Number of interviews	Response rate [RR] (%)	RR for East German MPs (%)	RR for West German MPs (%)
CDU (Bundestag: CDU/CSU)	683	357	52.2	68.4	42.1
SPD	566	326	57.6	71.6	50.9
FDP	104	52	50.0	62.5	46.3
PDS	142	131	92.2	92.3	91.7
B90/Die Grünen	96	45	46.9	62.5	45.5
Others	13	10	76.9	70.0	100
Total*	1604	921	57.4	74.4	46.9

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* MEPs excluded.